

IN THE NEWS
**British union
OKs Israel boycott**

Britain's largest union for college teachers approved an Israel boycott.

On Monday, the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education voted 106-71, with 21 abstentions, in favor of the measure.

The boycott applies to Israeli lecturers and academic institutions that don't publicly declare their opposition to Israel's presence in the West Bank.

**Israeli forces
thwart J'lem attack**

Israeli security forces foiled a suicide bombing planned for Jerusalem.

Israeli troops, acting on an intelligence tip, captured two Palestinian terrorists Monday en route from the West Bank city of Nablus to Jerusalem.

Their bomb belt, weighing 15 pounds, was safely detonated. It was not immediately clear to which terrorist group the Palestinians belonged.

**U.S. Senate
delays P.A. vote**

The U.S. Senate delayed consideration of the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act.

The Senate was due to have voted last Friday on the act, cutting off assistance to the Palestinian Authority, but a security scare stemming from an erroneous report of gunfire in the Rayburn Senate Office building delayed business until after the Memorial Day holiday weekend. With 89 co-sponsors, the act is guaranteed passage.

It would cut assistance to the Palestinian Authority, but differs from a version passed last week in the U.S. House of Representatives by allowing the president greater leeway in delivering emergency assistance to the Palestinians. It also narrows the bill's scope, limiting its restrictions to governments led by the Hamas terrorist group.

WORLD REPORT

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Pope's Auschwitz visit unifies faiths, even as Poland battles anti-Semitism

By DINAH A. SPRITZER

OSWIECIM, Poland (JTA) — Eleven years ago, at ceremonies marking the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, misunderstandings between Poles and Jews ran so deep that even a rabbi's desire to say the Mourner's Kaddish reportedly disturbed some Polish politicians.

In fact, there were so many debates over the tenor of the event that two separate ceremonies were held: one for Jews, the other arranged by the Polish government.

Fast forward to Sunday's visit by Pope Benedict XVI. Not only was Kaddish recited, but a whole new Catholic sensitivity to Jews was on display — even as Poland struggles to battle xenophobia and anti-Semitism, sometimes from Catholic sources.

But the pope's visit was a source of unity.

When meeting former inmate Henrik Mandelbaum, who was forced to burn the bodies of his fellow Jews in the Birkenau crematoria, the normally reserved Benedict kissed him on both cheeks; the latter blushed with gratitude.

Poland's chief rabbi, U.S.-born Michael Schudrich, not only said Kaddish in the presence of the pope and the country's top elected leaders, but also recalled those non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews from the gas chambers.

The pope prayed with clasped hands as Simcha Keller, director of the Jewish community of Lodz, sang El Maleh Rachamim, a solemn prayer said to honor close relatives who have died.

He also asked some difficult questions: "In a place like this, words fail; in the end, there

can be only a dread silence," he said, "a silence which itself is a heartfelt cry to God: Why, Lord, did you remain silent?"

Forced in his native Germany to join the Hitler Youth as a teen, Benedict said: "The rulers of the Third Reich wanted to crush the entire Jewish people, to cancel it from the register of the peoples of the earth."

Schudrich and others at the ceremony praised the pope for what they said was an honest and moving expression of love for all people, including Jews.

But Schudrich noted that the pope "stopped short of decrying anti-Semitism, and although his visit was a wonderful gesture to us all, not mentioning anti-Semitism was a glaring omission."

The chief rabbi's sentiments were echoed by a number of Jewish observers, including Auschwitz survivor Kalman Sul-tanik and Rabbi Andrew Baker, director of international affairs for the American Jewish Committee.

The pope's visit came at a time when Polish-Jewish relations are soaring. The country has the largest number of and best-attended Jewish festivals in Europe, countless Catholic-Jewish initiatives and massive government financial support for the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, expected to open in Warsaw in 2009.

However, the specter of anti-Semitism has not been erased in the country that was home to one of the world's largest Jewish communities before World War II.

Less than one month ago, an extreme-right Catholic party whose politicians have a long history of anti-Jewish and anti-gay positions

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**BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES**

■ *Poland is still battling anti-Semitism, sometimes from Catholic sources*

Continued from page 1

joined the coalition government at the request of Prime Minister Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz.

The League of Polish Families is presided over by Roman Giertych, the country's new minister of education. Giertych is formerly head of the All-Polish Youth, whose members have been photographed giving the Nazi salute, according to media reports. The league has its roots in the National Democratic movement, which advocated violence against Jews in the 1930s and was led by Giertych's grandfather.

In dozens of interviews, Jews and non-Jews said they worry that Giertych's rise had empowered the small segment of Polish society that is intolerant and xenophobic.

Several high-profile acts of anti-Semitism leading up to the pope's visit upset Poland's Jewish community, estimated at up to 10,000 in a country of 38 million.

Schudrich was, for the first time in his 15 years in the country, assaulted Saturday coming out of synagogue, when a man hit him in the face and attacked him with pepper spray, shouting "Poland is for Poles."

The previous Shabbat, some young men shouted anti-Semitic slogans at the rabbi and other worshippers.

Schudrich connected the ascension of Giertych and the league with these events and other recent incidents, including anti-Jewish threats sent by text message to Jewish student leaders and the stabbing of an anti-fascist by skinheads in Warsaw.

"There is a price to letting in extreme rightists into the government. It empowers xenophobic, homophobic and anti-Semitic members of society," Schudrich said.

Marcinkiewicz is a strong ally of Jewish causes, but he needed the league so that his conservative Law and Justice Party could have a majority in the Parliament.

"For their political stability they have opened up the floodgates of hatred," Schudrich said.

Marcinkiewicz's adviser on Jewish affairs, Agnieszka Magdziak-Miszewska, disputes this characterization.

"There is zero tolerance by the prime minister for anti-Semitism," she said.

She quoted what Marcinkiewicz told Israel's ambassador to Poland, David Peleg, during a May 19 meeting: "Bringing representatives of the All-Polish Youth into the government could give the impression that the Polish government will tolerate racism and xenophobia. This is not only false, but it will be absolutely condemned."

But the problem didn't really suddenly arrive when Giertych became a minister.

There are still questions about the influence of Radio Maryja, a Catholic radio station that has periodically spewed anti-Semitic rhetoric over the last decade. The main media supporter of the government, Radio Maryja was chastised by the Polish Conference of Bishops in April after a station commentator lambasted Jews and their "Holocaust business."

Then there's the shop underneath the church across from Warsaw's main syna-

gogue selling literature that questions Jewish patriotism, and although anti-Semitic graffiti declined exponentially since the mid-1990s, an Israeli Embassy employee pointed out a central Warsaw tram scribbling that said "Gays are Jews" not far from a Star of David in a noose.

To counter this negative image, government officials emphasize Poland's support of interfaith initiatives, as well as Jewish institutions and gatherings.

But there's no escaping Giertych, who is abhorred by most Poles and Jews alike.

During the pope's visit, he said on the radio that he planned to require high-school students to pass a "religious exam," which means a Catholic knowledge test, in order to graduate.

When Giertych came to see the pope at Auschwitz-Birkenau, he seemed puzzled when asked by JTA about his anti-Semitic image. "I am a lawyer and have many Jewish friends, I drink beer with them," he said.

Asked if he had a message for those worried about the anti-Semitic nature of his party, he said, "That's why I am here today," adding, "I am a friend of the Jewish nation."

Meanwhile, many Polish Jews told JTA they are sick of Americans painting their country as the epicenter of anti-Semitism when the reality was they had never had any anti-Jewish experiences.

"Jews and Poles suffered together like a family then, and they live together like a family now," Mandelbaum said after the ceremony. ■

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Michael Schudrich
Chief rabbi, Poland

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Pro-interfaith priest accused of spying

WARSAW (JTA) — A Polish priest active in promoting Jewish-Catholic reconciliation is accused of having been a Communist spy. The Rev. Michal Czajkowski has denied the allegations, but in the wake of the scandal he resigned May 22 as co-chairman of the Polish Council of Christians and Jews.

Warsaw newspapers reported the previous week that Czajkowski had cooperated

with the Communist security apparatus for 24 years. Stanislaw Krajewski, the Jewish co-chairman of the council, said the affair has been "very destructive to the atmosphere surrounding dialogue."

He said, "The most vocal friend of the Jews among Catholic clergy has been discredited in the eyes of many Poles." ■

Israel junket courts the cool kids

By URIEL HEILMAN

TEL AVIV (JTA) — The foreign journalists traipsed into the Jerusalem restaurant one by one, exhausted from a full day's work on assignment in the Middle East.

Weary though they were, these reporters on an eight-day, whirlwind tour of Israel had none of Gaza's dust on their clothes, no Palestinian tales of woe to share, no stories of Israeli sorrow to recount.

Rather, they carried bags bulging with Israeli hip-hop albums, their bellies were mostly full from a steak lunch and a few of them still seemed to be trying to recover from a night of carousing in Tel Aviv. And there were many more nightclubs, pubs and hot spots to visit that night.

"I'm actually having a really, really great time," said Andrew Coutts, an editor at *Stuff*, a raunchy men's magazine published out of New York. "I keep feeling that it should feel more strange to me that I'm drunk in Jerusalem right now, but it feels very natural at the moment."

As part of a novel approach to try to improve Israel's image abroad, a coalition of groups sponsored this press junket to generate positive media coverage of Israel beyond the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Rather than take news journalists to

Israel's border zones, army bases and Knesset meetings on the trip earlier this month, this tour brought reporters from hipster music magazines, racy publications and teen glossies to Tel Aviv nightclubs, meetings with Israeli rock stars and into the heart of Israel's avant-garde scene.

The goal: to show the other, cooler Israel to American entertainment journalists with a broad reading public.

"We want to build an image of Israel in America different than it is now, or more expansive than it is now, not just conflict related," said David Brinn,

editorial director of Israel21c, which organized the trip in conjunction with Israel's Foreign Ministry, the America-Israel Friendship League and America's Voices in Israel.

"They're saying, 'We didn't think Israel was like this,' which is exactly the kind of response we were hoping for," Brinn said.

Jessica Hopper, a radio journalist, writer and publicist from Chicago, said she hadn't really thought much about Israel at all

until she began telling friends about her planned trip here. They warned her in very stern tones to be careful.

"I think I only had one preconception: that we'd get blown up," Hopper said. "Being members of the media we consider ourselves more enlightened, but we didn't really have an accurate picture."

"We're seeing that the country and people here live totally normal lives despite the conflict," she said.

The carefully choreographed trip included meetings with Israeli musicians like world music artist Idan Raichel and hip-hop group Hadag Nahash, walks down Tel Aviv's trendy Sheinkin Street during the day and through the city's underground indie rock scene at night, and visits to Army Radio's broadcasting station, a gay and lesbian rights group and avant-garde performing arts centers. The group also visited the city of Safed, billed on the itinerary as "the home of Kabbalah" and

stopped by a house in Rosh Pinah that Madonna reportedly is interested in buying.

"I'm sort of pleased to see that Israelis come across as being positive and energetic. They don't seem depressed," observed James Katz, a music critic from *Vibe* magazine. "That's very encouraging for an overseas Jew like me."

The tour also included landmark Israeli sites like the Western Wall, the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial and Israel's West Bank security barrier, but politics were kept to a minimum.

"They're trying to correct the public image, to fight bad press with other press," Hopper noted. "It's an interesting idea."

Still, many of the journalists said they felt a bit overwhelmed by plunging into a country's pop culture without fully understanding the politics and history at play. Well aware that their hosts were showing

them a stage-managed version of Israel, they said they wanted to learn more about Israel beyond the polish and glitz.

Asked Aliya King, a reporter for *Giant* magazine, in New York: "I can't help but wonder, what do the Pales-

tinians have to say about things?"

Carlo McCormick, an art critic and youth culture writer for the New York-based *Paper*, also noted the absence of Palestinians from the tour.

"We met with one Palestinian this whole trip. They don't seem to have any voice in the media," McCormick said. "This is the most racist country I've ever seen."

The junket, of course, was not so much about these 10 reporters, but their influence on readers back home. They write for magazines like *Urb*, *Bust*, *Flaunt*, *Seventeen* and MTV's *Urge* Web site.

Midway through the trip, it seemed some of the journalists already had become advocates for Israel — particularly the Jewish reporters.

One of them, Lauren Brown, who has written for *Cosmogirl* and *Seventeen* magazine, said she was surprised that the trip felt like something of a homecoming.

"I'm thinking: How have I not been here before and when can I come back?"

FOCUS ON ISSUES

'They're saying, "We didn't think Israel was like this."'

David Brinn
Editorial director, Israel21c

THIS WEEK

TUESDAY

■ Four senators and four members of the U.S. House of Representatives are slated to introduce a resolution on the rights of Jewish refugees from Arab countries. The legislation was to have been introduced last week, but was postponed due to the visit to Washington of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

FRIDAY

■ The PLO's top negotiator, Mazen Areikat, and his team are in Washington to lobby against Israel's plans to withdraw unilaterally from parts of the West Bank should negotiations with the Palestinians fail.

SUNDAY

■ The Union for Reform Judaism's Northeast Council sponsors "Reclaiming Mikveh," a three-day interdenominational conference exploring new ways to utilize the ritual bath, in Newton, Mass. Clergy, educators and professional leadership from the Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist and Jewish Renewal movements will take part.

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Top Democrat slams AIPAC prosecution

The top Democrat on the U.S. House of Representatives Intelligence Committee questioned the statute used to prosecute two former AIPAC lobbyists.

The committee heard testimony last Friday on how to balance First Amendment protections with the need to stem leaks.

Some Republicans counseled the prosecution of recipients of leaks, including journalists. Rep. Jane Harman (D-Calif.), the ranking Democrat on the committee, blasted such talk. "If anyone here wants to imprison journalists, I invite them to spend some time in China, Cuba or North Korea and see whether they feel safer," she said.

She singled out for criticism the prosecution of Steve Rosen, the former foreign policy director at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, and Keith Weissman, its former Iran analyst, saying the statute used in the case was too broad.

Confession in Florida vandalism

A teenager in Florida confessed to vandalizing a Judaica store. On May 25, Connor Ranieri, 18, confessed to the attack against the Yiddishkeit store in Boca Raton in which he drew four white swastikas and a misspelled message that read "Bun the Jews."

If convicted, Ranieri could be sentenced to up to a year in jail.

Presbyterians challenge divestment

Some U.S. Presbyterian leaders challenged their church's policy of divesting from Israel. Completing a five-day fact-finding mission throughout Israel, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank on Monday, a group of 11 Presbyterian leaders said the current policy of divesting the church's \$7 billion pension fund from Israel is flawed and called for the 2004 decision to be rescinded at a general assembly scheduled for next month in Birmingham, Ala.

"It is now time to put aside this one-sided, negative and counter-productive policy that threatens to cause great harm to both Israel and the Palestinians while creating unnecessary polarization within our own denomination," said John Cushman, pastor of the Presbyterian Church of the Roses in Santa Rosa, Calif.

Iowa Jewish veterans honored

The graves of Jewish veterans in Iowa are receiving a U.S. flag for Memorial Day. Des Moines' Jewish federation is coordinating the efforts of Jewish veterans groups to place the flags on the graves in the area, the Des Moines Register reported.

The flags are part of a project to create a register of Jewish veterans in Iowa.

Jewish group calls for energy legislation

The American Jewish Congress urged passage of a bill that would facilitate U.S.-Israel energy cooperation. Both houses are considering legislation that would help spur Israeli research into energy-saving technology.

Israel is a leader in the field, and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert revived the proposal for such cooperation in his address to both houses of Congress last week. The AJCongress has lobbied for the legislation since it sponsored a conference in Israel in 2003, bringing together energy officials from both governments.

MIDDLE EAST

Israel, NATO announce drill

Israel is to take part in its first full NATO naval exercise. On Monday, Israel and NATO announced next month's drill in the Black Sea,

dubbed Cooperation Mako.

Several Israeli missile boats are to take part along with vessels from the 26-member strategic alliance.

With the Iranian nuclear threat looming, there has been speculation that Israel could apply for full NATO membership.

But Israel has played this down as unlikely given its desire to maintain independence in matters of national defense.

Haniyeh's daughter briefly arrested

A daughter of the Palestinian Authority prime minister was arrested in Israel.

Hawla Haniyeh, whose father Ismail Haniyeh is the top Hamas politician and banned from entering the Jewish state, was arrested Monday while trying to visit a Palestinian held at Eshel Prison in Beersheba.

The 17-year-old had tried to pass herself off as the inmate's sister, using a forged birth certificate.

She was taken to the Shin Bet for interrogation, but returned to the Gaza Strip when it emerged that the prison visit did not have a terrorist motive: The inmate, who is serving a 15-year sentence for security offenses, is the girl's fiancé.

Turkey opposes Iran nukes

Turkey reassured Israel that it also opposed Iran obtaining nuclear weapons.

"Turkey is completely against the proliferation of nuclear weapons," Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul told reporters Monday after talks with his visiting Israeli counterpart, Tzipi Livni.

Gul declined to address Arab claims that Israel's assumed atomic arsenal should be dismantled.

"I do not say that this or that state has nuclear weapons, but we believe in a region that has good neighborly relations and is free of nuclear weapons," he said.

Report: Iran boosts Hezbollah's reach

Hezbollah reportedly has rockets putting most of Israel's cities within range.

Ha'aretz reported Monday that Iran had supplied its Lebanese proxy with rockets that have a range of 125 miles, meaning a potential reach of as far south in Israel as Beersheba.

Israel fears that Iran could try to distract from international scrutiny on its nuclear program by sparking a flare-up in fighting between Hezbollah and Israel.

On Sunday, the two sides traded fire in the fiercest clash along the Israel-Lebanon border in years.

WORLD

Ahmadinejad: Germany shouldn't feel guilty

Iran's president said Germany should stop feeling guilty over the Holocaust.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told Der Spiegel in an interview published Sunday that "German people are prisoners of the Holocaust," and Germany should not allow itself to be held "hostage to the Zionists," since it is paying reparations.

Ahmadinejad added that "if the Holocaust happened, the Europeans must accept the consequences" and take the Jews back, as "the price should not be paid by Palestine.

If it did not happen, then the Jews must return to where they came from."

The Iranian leader also said that he might attend the World Cup in Germany next month, despite protests sparked by a "worldwide network of Zionists."